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MUSLIM TRADITIONS  
IN  
BENGALI LITERATURE

BENGALI LITERARY SOCIETY  
KARACHI UNIVERSITY



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This collection of essays is the Second Associate Publication of the Bengali Literary Review, a bi-annual published by the Bengali Literary Society, Department of Bengali, University of Karachi.

The price of this booklet is Rs. 2 or 3 sh.

November 1960

## PREFACE

The following monograph is not a history of muslim contribution to Bengali literature. In it I have attempted a critical survey of the basic traditions which muslim writers formulated and some of which were accepted by all the writers of a particular period. That is why I have not felt it necessary to mention all the writers or discuss their significant contributions. Nor have I discussed the literary merits of these contributions except in places where such a discussion has formed a part of my attempt to assess the significance of these traditions for Bengali writers. After all, a tradition is a dead weight unless it inspires later writers or helps them to strike a new note or hew out a new path. A tradition is not meant to compel a writer to imitate his predecessors. When it becomes a dead routine-work or an unnecessary fashion it is best to resort to rebellion and throw aside traditional forms of expression or patterns of values. On the otherhand, traditions always supply writers with a ready standard of values accepted by past generations. It is thus a connecting link between the old and the new. It also secures thus a relationship between the individual who writes and the society which has accepted a tradition. A tradition indicates social values and standards.

I have divided this monograph into two sections. In these I deal with traditions in Middle and Modern Bengali literatures. I have left out old Bengali literature for the obvious reason that Muslims had not entered Bengal in those early days. As regards the period-division I follow the traditional pattern. Middle Bengali literature ends with Bharatchandra or roughly in 1800 while Modern Bengali Literature may be said to have come into being with Mritunjay Tarkalankar and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. I stop at 1947 because post-partition literatures in East and West Bengals have different socio-cultural settings and hence different attitudes and values. They demand a different treatment.

I do not claim all-comprehensiveness for this little brochure. Detailed expositions would have led to voluminous output. I have indicated only major traditions in theme, form and diction. There is much that remains to be studied and analysed carefully. Abdul Karim Sahitya-Visarad's *Punthi-Parichiti* gives an account of a treasurehouse which has not been properly investigated. A large amount of material requires adequate editing and publication before a final judgement can be passed. I am certain that similar valuable materials are available in North Bengal. We are therefore still passing through a period of exploration and investigation. Bengali paleogra-

phy ought to be re-studied carefully. Bengali prose, especially the prose used in the courts of Judicature, need thorough study. Dating of a large number of punthis is as yet merely conjectural. Dr. Enamul Huq's datings in *Muslim Bengali Literature* are highly questionable. Even his linguistic study seems untenable. Only when these problems are solved can we take up the work of assessing the merits in a proper prospective. At present we shall have to be satisfied with broad general comments.

In this connection it is necessary to remind us of Dr. Sukumar Sen's *Islami Sahitya*. Enamul Huq's work supplements that work and surpasses it in factual information but both the works are tentative in nature. Sukumar Sen's title is misleading because 'Islami Sahitya' indicates the supremacy in literature of the religious attitude over the purely aesthetic; but he actually deals with muslim contribution to Bengali literature. I acknowledge my debt to these two works. They have facilitated my investigation and helped me with reference-material which would have taken up a long time for me to unearth without their pioneering work. Abdul Karim Sahitya Visarad's *Punthi-Parichiti* has also been of invaluable help. Ali Ahmed of Comilla College has done good supplementary work but unfortunately his findings have been published only in a thin brochure entitled *Muslim Kalami*

*punthl-sahityer rivaran*. It is more or less a list of manuscripts collected by him.

It is a vast field and I hope someone will take up the work in right earnest. Mr. Ahmad Sharif has started editing some of these early works but more people should come forward and a team of workers may achieve positive results.

Similarly, nineteenth century muslim writers have not received the attention they deserve. Mr. Abdul Hai and Mr. Ali Ahsan in *Bangla Sahityer Itibritta* have unearthed a large amount of material which need thorough study. Mr. Ashraf Siddiqui has also tried to edit a few books but his work is tentative and incomplete. Mature scholarship, critical acumen and a vast knowledge of language and literature are necessary for proper scholarly editing.

This brief discussion will indicate to the reader the difficult situation in which I found myself when I started writing this brochure. I have tried my best to be factual and not conjectural and I always kept in mind the famous confession of Dr. Johnson who stated that as he went through the previous editions of Shakespeare and started making conjectures himself he realized that the more he conjectured the less did he trust his conjectures.



## MUSLIM TRADITIONS IN MIDDLE BENGALI LITERATURE

A tradition is established in literature when certain themes, patterns or styles of composition are repeated with slight or considerable variations by a group of writers within a certain period. These variations should not destroy family resemblance; on the other hand, they should make the resemblance more prominent and pronounced. In a larger sense, a literary tradition expresses the experiences, ideas and hopes of the society or the group which gives birth to that tradition. It is only in this latter sense that the complete superstructure of European literature contains certain common traditions expressing the cultural experiences and aspirations of Europe.

From this latter point of view Middle Bengali Literature has three major traditions: the Buddhist, the Hindu and the Muslim. The Buddhist tradition is mainly a relic of Old Bengali and as such a spent force in this period. Muslim traditions were gradually gaining prominence and Hindu traditions were also being formulated. The sources of these traditions were different. Buddhism had suffered under Hindu rule and undergone a drastic change. It had lost the vitality of its early days; it had almost become a part of Hinduism. Though the Buddhists welcomed the Muslim invasion of Bengal and expressed their approval of the dethronement of tyrannical Brahminism in such poems as *Niranjaner Rushma*<sup>1</sup>, they had not vitality enough to create a cultural movement to counteract the forces of resurgent Hinduism and democratic Islam. Hinduism reacted in three different ways; it tried to revive Hindu nationalism among the masses and sow antagonism and hatred to Muslim culture by painting their cruelty, barbarism and licentiousness. *Mangala Kavyas* which were written as popular tales during this period clearly reveal this tendency.<sup>2</sup> There is hardly a Muslim character who is a match for Hindu heroes or heroines in virtue or bravery. This tradition continues throughout the Middle Bengali period and takes a new shape in the poems of Hemchandra and Navin Sen who preached the glory of Ramraj.<sup>3</sup> Though *Annadamangala* is not directly

antagonistic to Islam and the Muslims, the note of unconscious antagonism and dislike is revealed in the way in which Muslim courts are portrayed.<sup>4</sup> The large crop of *Mangala Kavvyas* also testifies to the popularity of their anti-Muslim and deeply pro-Hindu appeal. The second and a saner reaction is noticeable in the production of *Ramayanas* and *Mahabharatas*. In both the cases we notice that the authors have tried to write in popular style, make the books more religious in character and leave out elements which show the similarity between early Hinduism and Islam, or, which, according to the morality of the age, degrade Hinduism before the masses. The sensual elements of the originals have been completely suppressed. Through these books the authors wanted to make people conscious of their own beliefs and ideals and they succeeded so well that there was hardly a Hindu village where Bengali Ramayana and Bengali Mahabharata were not recited daily. But the most subtle and successful movement to counteract the growing influence of Islam was the movement of Shri Caitanya. He did not castigate Islam; he did not oppose it; he only tried to incorporate in the traditional Hindu manner the Muslim ideals of love, equality and brotherhood and prove that Hinduism has all the ideals which Muslim Sufis were preaching. *Caitanyacaritamrita*, *Keertanas* and the *Padavalis* reveal this new and most successful weapon to rouse Hindu sensibility with-

out offending Muslim sentiment.<sup>5</sup>

Muslims had to counteract these forces of Hinduism. They were at a disadvantage because they were foreigners and conquerors. They did not know the language of the country and they were aliens to its culture. But they had not conquered this country in order to loot and go away. They had come to settle and to purify the land of what they regarded as barbaric and harmful idol-worship. Therefore they proceeded on a very rational and tactful line. First of all, they began to settle in this country and call as many of their brethren as were eager to find new land and ready money. Along with these came a large number of saints who had set out from the Middle East and Arabia with the avowed intention of purifying the souls of unlettered tribes.<sup>6</sup> Muslim kings patronised them not merely as a matter of policy but more so because they believed in the efficacy of their spiritual power and fruitful blessings. The uneducated common people believed in miracles. The educated Hindus had no less faith in the divine power of the mystics. Makhdum Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi (d. 1225 A.D.) of Pandua, Shah Jalal Mujarrad-i-Yemeni of Sylhet (d. 1347 A.D.), Maulana Ata of Dinajpur (alive between 1300 and 1350), Shah Ali of Dacca (d. about 1510) and several other saints wielded tremendous influence over the people of the areas in which they lived.

They raised the prestige of Islam and the Muslims; they made Islamic culture and learning a dominant force in this country. It was their miracles and their prestige which inspired the Muslim writers of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the pictures of the exaggerated glory that we find in *Ghazivijay* and *Rasulvijay* poems.<sup>7</sup>

The second thing which successfully broke the defences in the hearts of people was the prestige of aristocracy which Muslim culture acquired within a few years. Hindus realized that Muslims had come to stay and rule. The practice and language of the ruling class, their manners and etiquette, their dress and food, their mythologies and heroes, all these began to bear the stamp of superiority. This influence was noticeable in nineteenth century Hindus, in Rammohan Roy and Devendranath Tegore.<sup>8</sup> It was because of this prestige and also because of the importance of Persian and Arabic as the languages of the ruling class, that Hindus also learned Persian and Arabic. As a result, a large number of Arabic and Persian words and phrases entered into the Bengali language. Most of them got so acclimatised that even the drastic drive of the pundits of Fort William college could not uproot them. Certain mythological figures and creatures like the fairies, jins, and giants became the common property of Bengali literature.

But probably more influential and powerful was the humanism of Islam. Islam is essentially a humanistic force. Therefore it released the lower castes from the bondage of low life to which they were cruelly condemned by the laws of their religion. Conversion was very rapid in the lower castes. This humanistic force is reflected in literature too. It did away with the Hindu conception that literary activity must have religion as its goal. Muslim writers were the first to introduce in poetry pure tales of love and human passions.<sup>9</sup>

Muslim culture was thus humanistic and religious. It relied on Arabic and Persian cultures because they were its sources. At the same time it tried to steal the thunder from Hindu culture by adopting certain Hindu forms and rituals especially in its ceremonies.<sup>10</sup> Along with this we see the rise of a Muslim sect of Sufis who used to accept Hindu yogi practices and try to bring about a compromise. This attitude of compromise is clearly evident in Bauls, Murshidas and Yoga-kalander series of poems. In brief we may conclude that significant aspects of Muslim culture could be seen in its religiosity, its love for mysticism, its attitude of compromise with certain aspects of Hinduism, its Persian bias and its humanism. It must of course be made very clear that the attitude of compromise did not mean any ac-

ceptance of Hindu values. It meant on the other hand that Hinduism was liberally interpreted with reference to Islam and only those of its aspects were emphasised which bore a close resemblance to their counterparts in Islam.

Another important element conditioned the literary traditions of Muslim literature in this period; this was the lack of confidence of the orthodox Muslims in the effectiveness of the Bengali language as a medium of religious instruction. In some cases, especially when Shah Muhammad Saghir and Sayyid Sultan were writing, this antipathy took the shape of positive antagonism. This was referred to by writers after writers and this conditioned their attitude to the content of their work. Muslim writers, especially they who wanted to be accepted by Muslim intelligentsia as competent artists, felt it necessary for them to show the capacity of the Bengali language as a medium of moral and religious instruction. This is the main reason for the moralising tone of the Muslim literature of this period, for its didacticism and for the large number of religious poems in Bengali.

As a result of these influences certain thematic, formal and linguistic traditions are evident in the Middle Bengali literature produced by Muslims. Form and language were not so important to the

writers as the themes. In most of the cases Muslims accepted existing forms and made some additions and alterations in order to eliminate or suppress typically Hindu elements. Thus Muslims found it impossible to accept the invocation to Sraraswati, the Muse of Poetry and fine arts or the invocation to gods and goddesses that we find in the opening of *Mangala Kavvyas*. They replaced these invocations by *Hamd* and *Nat*, the praise of God and the Holy Prophet. This was a consistent practice of all Muslim writers of epics and long narratives. Even when Alaol was writing *Padmavati*, the story of a Hindu princess, or when Daulat Qazi was writing the story of *Sati Moina*, another Hindu princess, they started by singing the praises of Allah and His Prophet. This suppression is more evident in romantic narratives. Hindu writers included romantic tales in the framework of *Mangala Kavvyas*, in the stories of their gods and goddesses. Muslim writers eliminated this framework and wrote simple, straightforward and direct narrative poems. In *Annadamangala* of Bharatchandra there is a good deal of incongruity because of the inclusion of an extremely sensual story within a story with evident religious motifs. Muslim writers got rid of the possibility of such incongruities and made the form more suitable for the romances of human life. Sometimes Muslim writers wanted to introduce typically Persian forms. *Jainaler Chautisha* was written by Shaikh



Faizulla with the evident intention of creating a new tradition. Unfortunately this new practice did not attract sufficient attention and it died a natural death.

Linguistic traditions are more important than the traditions of form but they are less important than thematic traditions. They have, however, a kind of vitality which seems to survive thematic traditions. Even now the practice of using Arabic and Persian words in order to describe typically Muslim context is a very common practice. This practice was not alive in nineteenth century aristocratic poetry but was revived by Mohitlal Majumdar and Nazrul Islam. This was a conscious revival, but Bharatchandra followed it almost unconsciously. We may call it a kind of decorum, a practice which followed the demands of the context. If a Muslim court was described, if a Muslim king was addressed, if Islamic thoughts and ideals and the Quran or the holy books were referred to, if Muslim saints and learned men were talked of, Arabic and Persian words were used. Even Hindu writers did so. Muslim writers did it from early days. Even Shah Muhammad Saghir, who was alive during the days of Sultan Ghiasuddin Azam Shah (1389-1409) referred to holy books as 'kitab', learned men as 'aliman'. As time passed this practice became more common and more pronounced. Jainuddin who belonged to the 15th century used

a host of these typical phrases and words while describing the dressing-up of the Holy prophet in his *Rasul Vijay*. 'Taj' was used instead of 'mukut'; 'sawar' instead of 'arohi', 'dada' instead of 'pita-maha'. This became more pronounced in a later poet like Sayyid Sultan (1550?-1648?), At the very outset of his magnum opus—*Shab-i-Miraj*, we find him unconsciously using a large number of nominals which had surely become the common property of the Muslims of this period. 'Allah', 'Rasule Khuda', 'noore Muhammadi', 'Asva' (really 'ashab' — the companions of the Holy Prophet), 'peer paigambar' (a phrase which literally means saint-prophets, but in usage — saints), 'kitab', 'bahut' (many), 'aliman', 'alim'. As we read this book and his *Navi-Vangsha* and *Ofate Rasul*, we find that not only nominals, he has also used verbs which are not at all Bengali in origin or colour. 'Nikalila' nikalite' (meaning 'went out' or 'while going out') are common words with him. Even adjectives like 'au-ale' (at the beginning) are common. This decorum has its counterpart in the practice which recommended Hindu words and phrases, images from Hindu myths and puranas, and concepts from the Hindu view of life when a Hindu tale is being unfolded. Alaol and Daulat Qazi very rarely uses words which are suitable in a Muslim context while telling the stories of *Padmavati* or *Sati Moina*. Their language becomes highly Sanskritised and charged with Hindu images

and feelings. They did not believe in Hindu myths with any religious fervour whatsoever, but it is highly creditable that they could utilise them as literary devices for the sake of their imaginative associations. This proves their liberalism; it also testifies to their artistic excellence and competence. This use of Hindu myths by Muslims for purely artistic reasons is evident also in poems whose content is evidently a Muslim experience. Jainuddin is easily reminded of the bravery of Bhim or Arjuna while he is describing the bravery of Hazart Ali in his *Rasul Vijay*. It is of course very typical of him that he compares only in order to show the greatness of Hazart Ali. Bhim and Arjuna become foils to make Ali shine more brilliantly.

The use of Arabic and Persian words, phrases and images acquired a new significance and colour during the 18th and 19th centuries. These were the days of Muslim downfall. Muslim kingdom gradually passed away from their hands into the hands of foreigners. Muslim customs, manners and etiquettes were gradually losing the aristocratic halo which used to surround them during Muslim rule. Muslims were becoming poorer day by day and their zemindaries were passing into the hands of their Hindu managers. English was gradually being introduced at the cost of Persian and Arabic and the Hindu pundits

were beginning to take revenge on the Muslims by trying to eliminate all Arabic and Persian words from the Bengali language. Englishmen encouraged such ruthless practice in order to ensure the total eradication of any trace of Muslim domination over this land. Oppressed, and repressed, Muslims, especially ordinary Muslims, turned more and more to romantic tales of love and adventure depicted in the everyday language which they used to employ for polished conversation, a language which was full of words and phrases and similes borrowed from Arabic and Persian literature. This is the most fruitful period of 'Dobhashi Puthi' literature. It is wrong to assume, as Dr. Enamul Haq has assumed in his *History of Muslim Bengali Literature*, that this linguistic practice was a conscious aversion to the usual practice of the day and hence unnatural.<sup>11</sup> It is evident from what we have already noticed, that this practice was the outcome of a long standing tradition of Muslim Bengali literature. We can only say that the social context only intensified the process and increased the stock of Arabic and Persian words. But it must be remembered that most of the writers were not strongly conscious of this Arabic and Persian vocabulary. Had they been so they would have used correct spelling which would have reproduced the exact sounds of the original words. But, instead, they used only those versions of Arabic and Persian words which had lost their

original pronunciation and had got acclimatised on the lips of ordinary Muslims. Nazrul Islam and Farrukh Ahmed are, in comparison, conscious revivalists. They were not. They were not even following a dying or a dead tradition. The tradition was very much alive because it was the tradition of the aristocrats who generally used a large number of Arabic and Persian words in their Bengali and who were accustomed to almost unconscious reference to Arabic and Persian literature.<sup>12</sup> It was only in the 19th century that this tradition decayed. Marshman and Carey had decided to drive out all Arabic and Persian words from the Bengali language;<sup>13</sup> Hindu pundits had tried to make the language unnaturally Sanskritised; and Vidyasagar, Mrityunjay and such other writers had come up to give a more acceptable shape to this newly formed linguistic tradition. That is why when Nazrul Islam and Mohitlal tried to revive this tradition, they were extremely conscious of what they were doing and had to use chaste Arabic and Persian words. The linguistic tradition of Dobahshi Puthi literature was therefore a natural, normal, popular tradition of the Middle ages. As we have already seen, it was not a novel practice in the 18th century; it was a well-established tradition even before these *puthis* had come into existence. The orthodox opposition to the use of Bengali as a medium of religious instruction necessitated the Islamisation

of Bengali by the use of words, phrases and images reflecting and expressing Muslim sensibility.

More important than this linguistic tradition is the tradition of using certain types of themes. The most important type is the humanistic, romantic love-story. Religion played such an important role in Hindu literature that it was not possible for a Hindu writer to tell a love story without bringing in the gods and goddesses. Moreover, the attempt of those writers was to rouse nationalistic feelings by making the Hindus more conscious of the spiritual power of the gods and goddesses, by infusing in the defeated Hindus a confidence in the power of their deities. But Muslims had no such inhibitions. They had also before them the practice of Nezami and Jami. Therefore it was possible for them to write a love story without bothering about its religiosity. All that they wanted was that the love story should not contradict the fundamental values of Islam. But at the outset it was also necessary for Muslims to give a religious turn to romantic stories. Otherwise orthodox Muslims would have condemned the practice. That is why when Shah Muhammad Saghir wrote his *Yusuf-Zulekha* he had to tell his readers that this love story has a place in the Quran and has a moral worth noting by all devout Muslims.<sup>14</sup> But, later on, writers were relieved of the necessity of making such

excuses. When we come to *The Arabian Nights*, for example, the 19th century translators—Raushan Ali, Syed Ali, Habibul Hossain and Aizuddin Ahmed, do not offer any excuse.<sup>15</sup> They go ahead with their tasks without any religious qualms. In all cases, however, even in the case of *The Arabian Nights*, the writers stick to Muslim ethical values. There is not a single instance of the glorification of adultery or fornication. Chastity is one of the fundamental virtues and all love affairs must ultimately end in marriage. Even the fairy like Kaira Parie must marry Hanifa. Where there is no marriage, physical alliance is condemned. In the story of *Laila and Majnu* love has been so spiritualised that the question of sensual relationship does not arise at all.

Besides this unequivocal moral tone, the traditional love-story has certain common features. Constancy in love is a virtue both for the lover and for the beloved. Chivalry and heroism are also necessary in the lover. In some cases heroism is not thought of at all. Manir Shami, the lover of Husna Banoo in *Hatim Tai*, is a love-lorn knight who wanders and weeps but not for a moment tries to solve the problems set for him. On the other hand he gladly accepts Hatim's intervention and is satisfied when he is able to marry. Hatim meets similar love-dejected creatures in his wanderings and each of them behaves

just as Manir Shami does. In Bahram Khan's *Laili-Majnu* Majnu goes a step further. His love consumes him so much so that he becomes a lover of love itself. He is forlorn like Manir Shami, but he does not go on weeping his fate, he forgets his sorrow in a greater love. It is also worth noting that love is always treated as a disease or a soul-consuming passion; its traditional seat is in the eyes. This is of course a very old conception. What is significant is that all the writers treat love in practically the same manner. Whether it is Kaira parree who falls in love with Hanifa (*Hanifa-o-Kaira Parree* by Sabirid Khan) or Manohar who meets Madhumalati at night accidentally (*Madhumalati* by Muhammad Kabir) or Taj-ul-Mulk who sees Bakawali asleep in her garden when he goes there in search of a 'gul' or a flower of her garden (*Gul-i-Bakawali* by Nawajish Khan), the lover becomes almost mad in love and seeks the beloved through all the vicissitudes of fortune.

Thus these romantic tales are tales of adventure too. Fate plays a very important part in these adventures. There is always some external force contriving either the meeting of the lovers or their separation and consequent suffering. Muslims introduced fairies as an instrument in the hands of Fate. Madhumalati and Manohar are brought together by fairies only because these fairies wanted to see who is more beautiful than



the other. This dangerous game is played by fairies again and again. Sometimes fairies themselves fall victims to this human passion through their own follies. In *Hatim Tai* and *The Arabian Nights* we also notice that human passion itself becomes a powerful instrument of Fate. Men and women have no control over it. The source of all adventures is this passion. Thus the entire action of the romance depends upon the first incident or accident of love.

Most often these adventures form the core of the tales. The romance is only a framework. Love is thus a device with these poets to help them write tales of romantic adventures in unknown countries. The framework of the story and the unity of the adventures of *Hatim Tai* are to be found in the central theme of love between *Manir Shami* and *Husna Banoo*. This is of course an extreme case. Between *Hatim Tai* and a purely love-tale like *Laili Majnu* a large number of tales were written by Muslim writers in most of which adventures originated by the lover's search after the beloved or the lover's desire to fulfil the conditions of marriage form the main theme. This is really a pattern borrowed from *The Arabian Nights*. This tradition continues from *Shah Muhammad Saghir* to *Sayyid Hamza*, the last important poet in this tradition.

It is because of this tradition of romantic

narratives that Bengali literature was enriched during this period by the introduction of the mythologies of Laili-Majnu, Shirin-Farhad and Yusuf-Zulaikha. They are the standards to which Muslim writers constantly refer when gauging the strength and the vivacity of the love of heroes and heroines. Even in religious writings Muslims used to employ these tales as symbols of the spiritual relationship that exists between the mystic and God. That is how Shah Muhammad Saghir tried to interpret the story of Yusuf and Zulaikha. That is how Jami interpreted the tale of Laili and Majnu in his well-known Persian poem. Thus, under the direct influence of Persian literature this tradition flourished and acquired new significances in the writings of different poets.

Another aspect of this romanticism was its love for the remote, the unrealistic, the fairy world. In almost every poem witchery, magic, and miracles have some part to play. Magicians are plenty in number and they always try to put some difficulty in the path of the hero or the heroine. Sometimes magic helps our heroes to get out of some difficult situations. Fairylands are very common and the commerce of men and women with jinns and fairies is one of the accepted principles. Taj-ul-mulk goes to the fairyland, Hanifa is carried to the land of the fairies. But the fairyland is never outside this earth. The

fairies and jinns are God's creatures inhabiting this very earth. As such, the fairyland is always a romantic, beautified, and glorified version of this world. It is only more beautiful than our own countries, more enchanting and more romantic. In that sense the fairyland seems to be the fulfilment of a dream of our writers. But actually it is not a mere dream, it is not a wish-fulfilment or an escapism. Fairies and jinns were believed to be actual creatures and therefore like an innocent child a Muslim writer could easily indulge in a romantic, extravagant dream about a beautiful fairyland. The energy, enthusiasm, extravagance and frank disregard of all sense of proportion and reality prove the youthful exuberance of a new race.

Closely resembling this romantic version of the world is the romantic version of Muslim history. The *Vijay Kavyas* illustrate the romantic, imaginative, miraculous exploits of the Holy Prophet and his companions. These poems were the productions of the urge to popularise Islam and prove the superiority of the Muslims over the 'infidels'. Therefore they relate the 'vijay' or the victories of the Holy Prophet of Islam over his infidel adversaries. In most of the cases the adversaries were not historical ceatures but believed to be historical by the poets who wrote the poems and the masses who read them.

One of the reasons for this belief is that the content of most of these poems was taken from Persian poems, at least the poets say so. Whether this is true or not has not as yet been proved because the originals have not been found. Jainuddin, the first writer of *Rasul Vijay* claims that most of the facts were derived by him from some original 'kitab'. But the incident is completely imaginative. He describes a battle between the Holy Prophet and King Jaikum, the king of the infidels. King Jaikum appears in Sabirid Khan's *Rasul Vijay* and Sayyid Sultan's *Rasul Vijay*. There might have been some Persian tale; it is also possible that there was no such Persian story. In order to compel the credence of ordinary readers, Jainuddin might have started the game by saying that he had taken it from some 'kitab'. This *Rasul Vijay* theme is followed up by the theme of the victories of the Prophet. There also we notice similar disregard of historical truth and almost complete reliance on imagination. Occasionally historical facts are included but in the main they reflect the same tendency to glorify Muslim leaders by showing their imaginative victories. Hanifa fights with Jaikum (*Hanifar Larai* by Mohamrnad Khan), Amir Hamza fights all types of imaginary battles till he courts martyrdom (*Amir Hamza* by Sayyid Hamza), —these are written for the sake of enjoyment and aesthetic pleasure and the satisfaction of the hunger for romance. Sayyid Hamza is rather bold and

outspoken. He says that he had written about these adventures only to complete what Garibullah began but, for want of information, could not complete. He completed it not because he got some new facts, but because there was a popular demand for the conclusion of the exploits of Hamza.

This tradition of the imaginative versions of history lost its impetus and momentum after its tremendous popularity in the late Moghul period. But the tradition of telling imaginative-cum-historical stories is still popular. *Vishad Sindhu* of Musharraf Hussian roused the anger of and drew protests from the educated Muslims. Kaikobad imaginatively recreated the tales of Muharram and Karbala, but boasted that he had not deviated from truth. This only shows that the attitude to historical tales has undergone a complete change under the influence, may be, of Western education. Even then, *Vishad Sindhu* is one of the most widely read books in Bengali literature.

Thematically *Vishad Sindhu* belongs to a later tradition of romanticising the Muslim past. Herein it is not the romantic glories of the Holy Prophet, it is the lamentations for the tragic deaths of Imam Hassan by poison and Imam Hussain in the field of Karbala that the writers are

eager to portray. The establishment of Mughal rule in this country was attended by the growing power of Shias. Along with this it must be remembered that the 16th and 17th centuries are the periods of Vaishnava revivalism. Muslims needed something more attractive than merely tales of victories which suit a young and adventurous race. Tales of tragedies are tales of deeper understanding showing that the people are mature enough to think of deeper problems. Though none of these 'Maktul Hussain' type of poems goes very deep into the problem of pain, they at least draw the attention of the people to a deepseated tragedy arising out of the conflict, as the writers and readers saw it, between faith and faithlessness, between devotion to a great cause and the desire for self-aggrandisement, between self-sacrifice and self-love. The central incident of these poems is the martyrdom of Imam Hussain. The entire story leads to that catastrophe but does not end with it. In every poem from Muhammad Khan's *Maktul Hussain*, the earliest so far known in this tradition, to *Muharram Parva* by Kaikobad, there is a long lamentation, *Marsia*, following the death of Imam Hussain. The chief characteristic of this lamentation is the freedom with which the imagination of the poets roams from earth to heaven and describes not only the lamentation of the trees and sky and the earth, but also of the angels and dead souls. We do not notice this freedom in

the modern period because the imagination of the modern man is restricted by his intellectual beliefs. It is practically impossible for him to cross the barriers of his sensations and conations and compel the credence of his readers by images of the unknown and the mysterious. The separation is so complete that it takes a good deal of effort on our part to appreciate the imaginative beauty of passages describing the lamentations of Bibi Fatima, Imam Hussain's mother in Heaven. But even now the simple villagers are moved by the recitations of the village-reciter who recites those moving passages with appropriate modulations of his voice. Marsia of that type is unimaginable, therefore, in our present-day set up. But the tradition of writing about this great and very significant martyrdom need not die out. It can easily be treated as a human tragedy. The medieval writers did not forget the human aspect. In Abdul Hakim's *Karbala*, Gribullah's and Yakub's *Muktul Hussain* and Hayat Mahmud's *Muharram Parva* the sufferings of the Imam and his family are not forgotten nor is the aftermath of this tragic end lost sight of.

Though the thematic tradition of *Maktul Hussain* has potential life, the tradition of religious themes has no vitality and cannot be revived. I have already said that the literary production of this age was conditioned by the orthodox opposi-

tion to the use of Bengali as a medium of religious communication. It was necessary for the writers to prove that Bengali can be successfully and effectively used for the preaching of Islam. It must also be remembered that the Middle ages was the priod of Muslim cultural expansion. Poetry was to serve the national cause, otherwise poetry would have stood condemned. There were two ways in which this service was performed. Poets like Sayyid Sultan and Muhammad Khan depicted through their poems the history of religions which used to end with the description of the Last Day of Judgement. Sayyid Sultan's *Navibangala*, *Shah-i-Miraz*, *Ofat-i-Rasul* and Muhammad Khan's *Mukul Hussain* and *Kiyamatnama* describe the Muslim conception of the origin, evolution, and distruction of the Earth and of the final Judgement of good and bad souls. Through this picture of the origin and destruction of the World these two writers are trying to substitute the Hindu version of the origin of the world generally found in the *Mangala Kavvyas* by Muslim versions. It was an attempt, as Sayyid Sultan put it, to enlighten the ignorant Bengalees who did not know Arabic and to purify their souls.<sup>16</sup>

Sayyid Sultan's attempt to purify the souls of illiterate and ignorant Bengalees is through a method which is more aesthetic than the method of other poets who follow the more obvious



method of direct preaching. Sayyid Sultan follows the narrative method. He tells us of creation, the birth of Adam and Eve, their love, their temptation and disobedience, their fall and separation, the long line of Prophets, the life of the Holy Prophet, his death, the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the story of the Last Day. But Afzal Ali preaches the rules and regulations of Islam. It is interesting to note that his *Nasechatnama* follows the pattern of the *Mangala Kavya*. Instead of a god or a goddess, his Peer Shah Rustam gives him instructions in dream and the poet relates to us what he dreamt. *Shariatnama* of Nasrullah Khan is equally frank in intention and design. At the very outset the poet makes it clear that he wants to tell the Muslims what the positive orders of the Lord ('amr') are and warn them against doing what the Lord has forbidden men to do ('Nihi'). It is necessary for us to note that Nasrullah Khan did not mean this book for non-Muslims. He wanted to make Muslims conscious of their religious laws. Similar is the intention of Shaikh Muttalib whose *Kifayat-ul-Musalleen* gives the rules and regulations of 'Namaz' 'Roza', 'Hajj', 'Zakaat' and such other essentials of Islam. Both Nasrullah's *Nasechatnama* and Shaikh Muttalib's *Kifayatul Musalleen* were popular books. This is testified by the large number of available manuscripts.<sup>17</sup> *Shihabuddinnama* of Abdul Hakim was also a popular contribution to this

sphere. What is of especial interest is the tone of the book. The tone of Sayyid Sultan and Nasrullah Khan was apologetic. They were doubtful of the reception they would get because of the use of Bengali as a medium of preaching Islam. The tone of Abdul Hakim is bold. He condemns those who oppose the idea of preaching through Bengali. On the otherhand he says that, after Arabic and Persian, Bengali is the language of Islam. Those who do not know Arabic and Persian, should read Islamic literature in Bengali, otherwise they cannot have 'faith', they will remain in 'darkness'. This shows that the tradition of Islamic literature in Bengali had become well-established during the time of his composition. Dr. Enamul Haq thinks that his dates are roughly 1620-1690.<sup>18</sup> Whether this conjecture is accurate or not, it is evident that a large number of people were writing different kinds of Islamic literature during 17th and 18th centuries. This is the period when Islamic Bengali had also established itself in this country and the Muslim writers were writing in this style. We find, therefore, in the tradition of Sayyid Sultan and Muhammad Khan, books like *Ambia Vani* by Hayat Mahmud, and *Kasasul-Ambia* by Rezaullah, Amiruddin, and Ashraf Ali; and, in the tradition Nasrullah Khan and Shaikh Muttalib, books like *Namaz Mahattya* by Muhammad Jan, *Hitajnan Vani* by Hayat Mahmud, *Chipt-Iman* by

Badiuddin and *Ahkamol Zoma* by Male Muhammad. Both these traditions continued upto the beginning of the twentieth century. *Kassasulambia*, for example, was published in three parts in 1268, Bengali era. Both the traditions are dead now. The former has been usurped by regular histories of Islam and religions written on scientific lines. The other tradition has passed into the hands of the prose writers who are interpreting Islam to the masses through the prose translations of the Holy Quran or of the Persian and Urdu books of Islamic canons and laws. As examples of these we may mention the *Life of the Holy Prophet* written by Shaikh Abdur Rahim in the late 19th century and *Shaubhagya Sparshamani* of Imam Ghazzali translated by Mirza Yusuf Ali or *Beheshti Zcor* translated by Maulana Shamsul Haq from the Urdu original of Maualna Ashraf Ali Thanavi.

Besides the above two ways, the religious sentiment of the Muslims of the middle ages found expression in Sufi literature and songs, both popular and highly literary. I have already pointed out that Islam was preached in this country by the Sufis. They wielded tremendous influence over the public. These Sufis were divided into several sects. Of these, the 'Kalandaria' sect was the most numerous. At one time 'kalander' was synonymous for a Muslim saint. But Sufism had various manifestations. Generally it varied

from a synthesis of religions preached by Dara Shikoh in his '*Majmu-ul-Bharain*' to the extreme orthodox form of Islam preached by the greatest Muslim reformer of this subcontinent, Hazrat Mujaddid-i-Alfe-Sani Shaikh Ahmad of Sirhind. There were also degenerated forms of Sufism which exploited the credulity of the masses and used all types of devices to attract people to khankas. This popularity and influence of Sufism gave birth to several traditions in Bengali literature of which there were two varieties—the literary traditions and the folk traditions.

The literary traditions fall into two categories: the tradition of philosophical expositions of the theory and practices of Sufism, and the tradition of songs, mainly *padavalis*. The folk tradition is mainly the traditions of *Murshidi* songs which describe through symbols the different stages which a disciple should pass through in order to reach the final stage of illumination and self-annihilation.

The philosophical variety of poems in the first tradition has hardly any poetic value. They were intended as instructions or description of mystic processes. For want of prose the writers had written in verse. This type of literature follows the same line which the poems about Islamic laws follows. Whereas they describe

the 'externals' or the 'body' of Islam, these describe the 'internals' or the 'soul' of Islam; they describe 'shariat' which is 'Zaheri' or the external aspect of Islam whereas these describe the 'bateni' or the internal aspect of knowledge. As such these were mainly intended for the novitiates in Sufism. Even then, as Sayyid Sultan explicitly says in his *Jnan Pradeep*, no internal knowledge is possible without the regular instructions of the Peer. This literature was therefore intended to help those who had already taken the help of Peers and who wanted to keep in touch with knowledge about this inner world. Haji Muhammad's *Noor Jamal* is more philosophical than Sayyid Sultan's *Jnan Pradeep*. He not only tells his readers of 'shariat' in the first part of the book, he also goes deep into the philosophical expositions of different theories about the unity of God: the theories of Ibn-ul-Arabi and Mujaddid-i-Alf-e-sani. This tradition has, like the former tradition, become a tradition in modern Bengali prose.

More effective and more literary is the tradition of *marafati* songs including *padavalis* which the Muslims accepted as a medium for communicating their spiritual experience of higher reality. From Sayyid Sultan to Alaol, a large number of Muslim writers used this *padavali* form only because it had become

a literary device. Radha and Krishna were not considered as actual human beings, or even as a goddess and a god. They were the symbols of the human soul and the Divine Being. The song of the flute was the call of the Eternal Divine Being. The language of this form was also artificial, a literary device which suited the symbolic content of the poems. Five Muslim writers have been given some place in the Vaishanava *Pada* collections--*Gaudapadatarangini* and *Padakalpataru*. They are: Shah Akbar, Nasir Mahmud, Kabir, Salbeg, and Sayyid Murtaza. Vrajabuli is no longer a living poetic diction. Along with it has died the symbolic tradition of Radha and Krishna. Hence Muslims no longer write in this form. Nazrul Islam is the sole exception. He did not try to revive this Radha Krishna tradition, but he utilised it and wrote *Kcertanas*. The death of this tradition does not prove its literary inefficacy. It was a very effective tradition when it was alive. Muslim mysticism, especially that aspect of it which is very akin to the Vaishanava concept of love was most effectively expressed in this form. The effectiveness depended on the mystic experience of the writer and his capacity to express this experience. As there was no stress on philosophical exposition, as the stress was wholly on the creation of an emotional atmosphere, the success or failure of these poems depended on the

organisation of feelings. As such, they have true aesthetic flavour.<sup>19</sup>

The popular folk tradition of murshidi songs and, later on, of Baul songs, went very deeply into philosophical expositions. Even now, the murshidi songs are very popular in the villages. These murshidi songs have cycles of their own. A group of songs form a cycle. Generally, the cycle begins with the body and its different senses and ends with the soul which has reached self-annihilation in God through the peer or murshid. Some of the songs are so highly philosophical that it becomes very difficult for us to understand them. Various symbols are used. Radha Krishna symbols are not generally used. The boat, the journey through a dangerous river or through a river in storm, the sun and the moon, the market, the doors and windows all these are used as symbols to mean the body or the world and the condition of the soul in it. All these symbols are drawn from common life and, as such, there is enough vitality and freedom in symbol-coinage. This folk tradition is still alive and even now village poets are producing poems of exceeding poetic beauty.<sup>20</sup>

We may, therefore, conclude that especially from the linguistic and thematic points of view, middle ages was a glorious period of Muslim

traditions. Muslims had not only created a new literary form of romantic literature, they had also thereby freed Bengali literature from cramping, sectarian influence. It is also worth noticing that Muslims were broadminded enough to write most successfully about Hindu princes and princesses. They also gave birth to several thematic traditions most of which are still alive in some form or other. They also enriched the vocabulary of this language, and the mythological content of this literature. But, everywhere, in mythology, in religion, in words and phrases and images, they show their kinship with the international Muslim world whose traditions and conceptions, like the traditions of European civilization cross all frontiers and borderlines. These traditions are, therefore, the Bengali versions of Muslim traditions. Muslim traditions were tempered by local influences and the demands of time and place.



## MUSLIM TRADITIONS IN MODERN BENGALI LITERATURE

Bengali literature was marooned in the early 19th century in existing forms. The release came under the influence of English literature. The establishment of the Hindu College in Calcutta and the gradual spread of English education among the upper classes opened a vast treasure-house of new values and forms which Bengali writers began to enjoy and assimilate. But this enjoyment was not at first shared by the muslims of Bengal. The very process of education by infiltration left them outside the pale of English education because muslims by this time had become poor and helpless. Lord Bentinck's policy had abolished the Qadi system and with-

drawn financial support from native madrassahs and thus a large number of muslim families were completely ruined. Even before Bentirck's arrival, the new permanent settlement with the accompanying regulation to auction the property if tax was not paid within the stipulated period reduced a large number of unaware and unaccustomed muslim landlords to total bankruptcy. Most of the zemindari passed over to the hands of their own Hindu managers who were well-versed in the new technique. It is mainly this economic poverty which prevented them from acquiring the English education which only the richer classes could afford to give to their children. Otherwise the Muslims would have pushed forward long ago. Moreover, the government policy was not to support the muslims but to encourage the Hindus. On top of these, we find a large number of missionary schools opened to convert the 'natives'.<sup>2</sup> Naturally the Muslims kept themselves aloof from what they considered to be contagious influences.

As a consequence, the impact of western civilization and culture was felt mostly by the Hindus who rose to the occasion and admirably faced the situation. A desire for reformation and revival became evident in them.<sup>3</sup> Bengali prose was born, a new poetic form was created and the novel came to occupy an important place; in the

new heirarchy of literature the romances or the Punthies were pushed back to the village-yard. And in all these three forms—prose, poetry and fiction, the demand of the newly educated Hindu society was considerably satisfied. The muslim society was not taken into consideration by the Hindu writers. It was not possible for them to do so, neither was it desirable from their revivalist point of wiew. On the other hand we notice a positive revulsion against the muslim rule in a writer like Bankim Chartterjee.

Along with this should be remembered the rise of a new aristocracy based on commerce and trade and the rapid growth of Calcutta as the capital and centre of western culture which was the ideal for this aristocratic class. Muslim aristocracy was landed aristocracy, hence it did not come into contact with the throbbing life and energy of Calcutta. Lack of quick means of communication till the end of the nineteenth century kept the villagers away from the cities. Hence neither the muslim aristocracy nor the muslim masses were much influenced by new ideas. Nor did they know that the cultural leadership was rapidly slipping out of their hands.

It was because of these economic reasons that the 'fatwas' of the ulema condemning the so-called "Christian' education could be so effective. They

became still more effective because the glamour of the Moghul empire lingered in muslim minds which were burning with the desire to revive the ancient past. The reform movement of Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed, the so-called Wahabi movement, did not take into cognisance the complexity of the modern civilization and thus attempted to overlook the challenge of western culture to traditional values. Their muslim consciousness was chained to conventions, traditions and values which needed rediscovery and reappraisal in the light of recent developments. It was not until the advent of Sir Syed that our values and traditions could again be studied with a certain amount of detachment and that a neo-revivalism could dawn in Bengal.

This revivalism, started in Bengal as a rival movement to Hindu revivalism, was a reaction to the 'Ramaraj' ideology of Hemchandra and Navin Sen. Books like Bankim's *Anandamath* and *Rajashingha* increased this rivalry. Therefore this neo-revivalism had both a positive and a negative aspect.

When Muslim writers, therefore, began to write, they discovered that already there had developed a prose which was very different from the colloquial prose used in their conversation, a growing tradition of novel-writing imported from the west and a new kind of poetry which

had left the tradition of the punthis far behind. The values incorporated in these forms were the values of a Hindu Society. The earlier Muslim traditions of forms, vocabulary and imagery were considered dated, outmoded and unpalatable. They found that punthi-writing was practised only in the villages; the educated society of Calcutta considered Byron, Shelley, Keats, Milton and Shakespeare as their ideals and models. They had therefore to adjust themselves to this tradition and then bring whatever new they could.

This adjustment took the following form. In the first place, they looked back not to the recent past but to the remote past, to the primal sanctity and glory of early muslim life in order to find a scale of values which would be acceptable to the Muslim community and also to set up an ideal big-enough to counteract the Hindu ideal of 'Ramaraj'. That is why the biographies of the Holy Prophet of Islam and his followers were printed and published. It was not an age of satires for the muslims; the society was too immature to tolerate it and understand its significance. Emotional exhuberance was the rule.

This uncritical emotional exhuberance was accompanied by an exhortative tone and a theatrical flourish. Whether it is the series of essays in *Al-Islam* by Maulana Muniruzzaman Islamabadi or

the *Anala-Provaho* of Ismail Hussain Shiraji, the same reformativc attitdue, the same predominant didactic note and the same exhortative tone are evident. Even the essays of Lutfur Rahman and Yakub Ali Chowdhury have the same tone and temper. The essays are critical of social evils but they are uncritical in their glorification of the past. The poems are uncritical in their lack of proper organisation and artistic skill. This attitude — the glorification of the past, the lamentation for the present and the exhortation for the future became a traditional attitude of Muslim poets upto Farrukh Ahmed. In the twentieth century Nazrul Islam became the greatest exponent of this attitude. His *Khalid*, *Jaghlul Pasha*, *Kamal Pasha*, *Anwer Pasha*, *Muharram*, *Shat-il-Arab* are well known poems following this particular tradition of *Anal Provaho* and *Muharram Sharcef* of Kaikabad Farrukh Ahmed's *Sat Sagarer Madjhi* and Ali Ahsen's *Makha Moazzamer Pathe* toe the same line.

The other important and significant tradition that grew up as a corollary of this attitude is the tradition of recreating the past either through biographies or through histories or historical fictions. Kaikabad's *Mahashashan Kavya*, *Shah mandir*, and *Muharram Sharcef* are historical fictions which, according to him, would serve two purposes first, bring out the glory of the Muslims and secondly give artistic pleasure.<sup>3</sup> Meer Mosharruf

Hussain's *Vishad Shindhu*, Hazrat Umarer Dharma-  
jeevan Labh, Hazrat Belaler Jeevani, Hazrat Ameer  
Hamzar Dharmajeevan Labh, Madinar Gaurav, Muslim  
Veeratta, Islamer Joy belong to the same category.  
It is true that some of them are histories and  
some like *Vishad Sindhu* are mostly fictitious, still  
they belong to the same tradition—an attempt to  
present the past as an ideal, to create an emotional  
hankering in the readers for the bygone days.

Thus out of this tradition emerged the tradi-  
tion of writing biographies of religious and other  
leaders of the past and also the tradition of semi-  
religious poems. They were to some extent apo-  
logetic in attitude. Syed Amir Ali's *The Spirit of  
Islam* indicates this apologetic nature—the attempt  
to justify Muslim past by stressing certain achie-  
vements, by trying to prove from a modern point  
of view the legitimacy of certain actions. Muniruzzaman  
Islamabadi's *Bignane Musalmaner Dan* is a fatter product with the same title. The  
Pakistan movement demanded more books in this  
line. One important characteristic of these books  
and works is an attempt to prove the greatness of  
the muslims by minimizing early muslim follies  
and failures and, in some cases, by an acceptance  
of unverified data. But they helped the growth of  
a body of literature which is now being supple-  
mented. The other important aspect of this  
tradition is the stress on pre-Indian and, in some

cases, pre-Iranian muslim glory. The period of conflict and internal dissensions seems to have escaped the notice of the Bengali Muslims of this period. In other words, the emotions of the Bengali Muslims were not attached to their soil, they did not think much about their own surroundings, they did not draw much inspiration from their recent past; they attached their emotions to the revolutionary glory of early Islam; they applauded the values taught by the Holy Prophet and were inspired by the remarkable achievements of the early Muslims. Thus the range of Bengali literature was extended to incorporate within it the ideals and values of an entirely different origin. The difference between *Muharram Sharaf* of Kaikobad and *Nari Vangsha* of Syed Sultan clearly indicates that these values of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries were more puritanic than those of the 16th and the 17th centuries.<sup>6</sup> The Khilafat movement gave a new impetus to this puritanism but it is in the Pakistan movement that this puritanism found its actual goal.<sup>7</sup> Syed Sultan's religiosity was of a mystic nature but this puritanism was militant. But the Muslims of this sub-continent did not get a religious-cultural leadership, hence immediately after the partition puritanism could not be canalised and given a proper direction. Moreover, as the religious sensibility was, to a large extent, a result of an anti-Hindu zeal, as soon as this negative



incentive became insignificant, the intensity evaporated and the attention was diverted to internal problems. However, the religio-political zeal left its permanent impression on the poetry of Farrukh and a group of young poets of the 40's and on the semi-political, semi-religious essays of Muhammad Wajed Ali and Mujibur Rahman Khan. It also led to pamphleteering and journalism among the Muslims. Thus it not only fostered a new attitude among the Muslims, it also affected the growth of new forms and extended the range of our vocabulary.

In order to understand the vitality of these forms and the source of this vocabulary we ought to take note of a critical attitude towards the present which grew up alongside the emotional hankering for the past. Whether it is *Jamidar-Darpana* of Meer Mosharraf Hossain or *Stri-Shikkha* of Ismail Hossain Shiraji or *Bangaleer Bhavishwat* of S. Wajed Ali or *Matichur* of Begum Rokayya Sakhawat Hossain, the intention is to hold up a mirror before the society in order to make it remove its shortcomings. Even Nazrul Islam and Farrukh Ahmed were not inspired by the ideals of pure aestheticism. Nazrul made it very clear in one of his poems.

I don't care whether I shall be

remembered after the

enthusiasm of this age has exhausted itself  
It's enough that the sun is  
shining over my head and  
hundreds of golden lads and girls  
are moving about me.<sup>5</sup>

What he wants is 'freedom' and 'reform'. From the very outset till independence, therefore, in almost all the forms, Muslim writers had tried to be realistic inspite of their idealism. Occasionally this realism took the form of satire as in *Jamidar Darpana*; at other times, it made the writers intensely romantic and full of day dreams and at times they were just realistic as in *Abdulla* of Qazi Imdadul Huq or *Natun Ma* of Ikramuddin. *Anwara* of Najibar Rahman, the first novel written by a Muslim, is a mixture of realism and romance.

It may, therefore, be concluded that so far as their attitude was concerned the Muslim writers were mainly romantic in their ideals and realistic in their approach to social problems. In most cases both idealism and realism were present in the same writer as for example in Meer Mosharrarf Hossain and Ismail Hossain Shiraji. It is this complex attitude which determined the nature of the forms and the vocabulary used by these writers.

Muslim writers tried their hands in all the existing forms. They csnto be sited to have

Invented any new form during this period. In poetry Kaikobad imitated the Sanskrit epic form revived by Michael Madhusudan and followed by Hemchandra and Navin Sen. In lyrics he and Emdad Ali imitated Biharilal and other poets of that era. Ismail Hossain Shiraji's *Anala Prabaho* is full of that rhetorical flourish which we notice in Navin Sen's *Palasheer Juddha*. It is only when we come to Nazrul Islam and Jasimuddin that we discover some positively novel contribution in form. Nazrul's *Vidrohi* is written in free payar verse-form and the organisation of the entire poem is far less classical and rigid than that in Tagore's poems. In this, as well as in *Pujarini* and *Sindhu*, his verse-master is Tagore but the rhythmic flow is entirely his own. The strength, vivacity and rapid flow mingled with extreme, and, in places, rather uncontrolled loquaciousness gives his poems a swift movement unknown in Tagore's poems. The *matravritta* movement of his oratorical poems in which he invokes the spirit and glory of the past Muslim leaders has its origin in Satyen Datta's poetry. But his frequent use of this form makes us associate his name with it and we remember him as soon as we hear such an oratorical outburst. His most original contribution in verse-form comes from his contact with Persian poetry. It is he who revived this contact and made the *gazel* a vital form. His *gazals* overwhelmed the Bengalee public with their mellifluous movement, their soft and enchan-

It has been the practice of the muslims to use Arabic and Persian words in Bengali. But they transformed the words and made them Bengali words by pronouncing them differently and also spelling them in accordance with their Bengali-ised pronunciation. When missionaries like Marshman and Kery and the Hindu pundits of Sanskrit College tried to invent Bengali prose they made it their firm policy to exclude all such words. Kery declared this policy explicitly in the preface to his Bengali-English Dictionary. This policy of purge was successful only because muslims were not the culturally dominant section of the country. Muslims, however, retained their habits of speech inspite of the new Bengali Prose which flourished in the hands of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and Bankim Chandra. In mid-nineteenth century, however, Tekchand Thakur wrote a book entitled *Alah Gharer Dulal* in which he intended to give a realistic and satiric picture of the aristocrats of Bengal in simple conversational prose. His prose contained a large number of Arabic and Persian words. This indicates the nature of the vocabulary of the spoken Bengali of the cultured class. But the new education-system and the attempt to purify Bengali denuded the language of a rich heritage which could have been a fruitful source of new experiences for the readers. Instead, such a vocabulary was considered ridiculous. Kaikobad therefore wrote

in his inaugural address to the annual conference of East Pakistan Literary Society in 1943 that the Hindu writers accepted his style because it was "pure" (p. 1 of M.S). When we come to Tagore we notice this limitation. In spite of the wide range of his vocabulary and imagery he is exclusively confined to Hindu life and conditions, to Hindu mythology and history, to Hindu philosophy and ideas. Though he has accepted many ideas and images from the West he has left out muslim situations and muslim myths and ideas. He did not do it intentionally. It seems that he was not emotionally alive to these situations and ideas. That is why, though he extended the range of our vocabulary, he was highly exclusive so far as the muslims were concerned. It was Nazrul Islam who first tried to meet this demand by using a large number of Persian and Arabic words. The difference between Nazrul Islam's use of these words and the use of Persian and Arabic words by the Punthi-writers lies in the fact that while the latter used Bengali-ised Persian and Arabic words, Nazrul used original words in their original form. This indicates that Nazrul Islam was consciously reviving the use of Arabic and Persian words whereas the Punthi-writers were using the words which were in common use in their daily lives. It also proves that Nazrul had to take recourse to Arabic and Persian words in their ori-

ginal forms in order to avoid the ridicule that his use of the "vulgarised" form would have aroused in the minds of the educated people. Even then, Nazrul did use the vulgarised form in some of the poems where he depicts village life. Before Nazrul Islam, Mohital Majumdar and Satyendranath Datta had used Arabic and Persian words in some of their poems as for example in Satyen Datta's *Noor Jahan*. But in each case it was noticed that they followed the practice of Bharat Chandra who also used Arabic and Persian words only to suit the character or the situation. Bharatchandra made a muslim character use these words or allowed these words to be uttered in the court of the Nawab only for the sake of the atmosphere. In the case of Nazrul it was different. He used them in the place of words of Sanskrit origin, for example, he used the word 'Khun' instead of 'Rakta' to mean blood. Tagore objected to such a use because, in his opinion, it unnecessarily confused the meaning of the word 'Khun' which means 'murder' also. But Nazrul used it because muslims were accustomed to both the meanings.

Nazrul did not use these words with a vengeance. His profuse energy needed this additional vocabulary. What he did more successfully was the creation of imagery adequate for his feelings, imagery drawn from muslim lives. He used imagery from

Hindu myths and situations also but they were more conventional than realistic. In those images he was carrying on or imitating the older Hindu tradition. Whenever he drew images from history or myths, they became vitalized and appeared to be entirely original because no previous poet had drawn such images so successfully.

Nazrul's tradition was carried on by Farrukh Ahmed who also used original Arabic and Persian words, not their naturalized versions. With Farrukh, however, we enter into a new arena of muslim consciousness. He began writing during the days of the Pakistan movement. As a result he is overconscious in his use of Arabic and Persian words which some people considered to be a fetish. But the most significant thing that Farrukh achieved was the allegorising of the Sindbad myth. Nazrul was not allegorical or even symbolical. He drew imagery from his experiences and knowledge. But Farrukh is consistently symbolical in his use of a myth. Sindbad is the symbol of the muslim society, of muslims consciousness, of muslim inertia, of muslim glory, of muslim adventure: Mount Hera becomes the symbol of the source of inspiration, of the ideal land of purity, of the haven of Heaven, as also of the place where the holy prophet received his call. Thus Farrukh is the first poet to achieve in Bengali what Iqbal has achieved in

Urdu — to use muslim past and muslim myths successfully in poetry. In *Sat Sagarer Madjhi Farrukh* remains a poet of hope and aspirations. He is not realistic in his attitude, form or imagery. Therefore the myths retain their quality of distance.

It is here necessary to point out the reasons for which the muslim mind is seeking adequate myths. A 'myth has been defined as "a sensible and dramatic representation of a supposedly recurrent or unique event (in the past, the present, or the future), an event with an important theme which is represented primarily in the mind (imaginal myth), but secondarily in words (narrated myth) in quasi actions (enacted myth), or in some artistic form (Portrayed myth)".<sup>12</sup> Among its 'potencies' or 'properties' the following are included: "(a) The sensible mythic representation is *peculiarly attractive* in one way or another (vivid, impressive, spectacular, beautiful, enchanting, marvellous, mysterious), leaves a durable and recurrent imprint in many minds, and is often reproduced in different narrated, enacted, or portrayed versions (Cynosural function.) (b) It *evokes empathy* (Corresponding feeling) or *recipathy* (reciprocal feeling) and binds positive affection (admiration, awe, adoration, fellow feeling, love, compassion over a considerable period of time (affective function) (c) It *char-*



*belief* in its essential validity or authenticity, or faith in its occurrence in the future (cognitive function). (d) It *guides conduct* by portraying one or more basic human needs, their goal, the actions they propel, and the disastrous or successful outcome of these actions. If the aim or action of the hero is extravagant, vainglorious, reprehensible, immoral and its outcome tragic, the story produces an empathic discharge and subsequent reduction of similarly unacceptable dispositions in susceptible receptors (affective and deterrent functions). But if the aim and action of the hero or heroic group is admirable and the outcome happy (or may be tragic), the story serves to initiate, orient, encourage sustain, and ordinate comparable behavior (educative function). This last is most applicable to *exemplar myths*, individual or social (e) It produces all these effects to a sufficient degree in a large number of people — members of the same group, society, or religion — and thereby *brings about wholehearted cooperative participation* in the execution of an important endeavor or ceremony (consensual functions)". 13 The muslim mind today is still mythopoeic because a muslim has not as yet reached the stage which a modern civilized man is supposed to have reached — *l'état positif*, without myths. But his religion itself is so puritanic and iconoclastic that he is deprived of that type of myths which are more ritualistic, concrete and

therefore more earthly. He has no gods and goddesses as the Greeks had or as the Hindus have. His God is so transcendental and all-inclusive that, inspite of His having a personality, He seems to be a formless abstraction. As a result a muslim mind does not naturally concretize but tends to delve in spiritual abstractions. The histories of the prophets also retain that quality because their lives are regarded as sinless. Hence indulgence in sensuousness will be derogatory to their greatness. Therefore insistence on allegorical interpretation is evident in Jami's and Nejami's stories. Moreover, as a muslim believes in all the prophets, he is overcautious in his statements. He cannot be freely creative. Thus the histories of the Prophet lack that basic quality of a myth which we see in the stories of the gods and goddesses, the freedom to recreate them, to add to them, to alter them. The muslim mind had circumvented this difficulty in the past by reforming the histories to suit their temporal and local taste. That is why we notice even the holy prophet of Islam attired in kingly dress, Hazrat Imam Hasan and Husain fighting with fictitious infidel kings and Hanifa coming to Chittagong and marrying Koyra Paree.<sup>14</sup> These "supposedly recurrent events" find their most powerful expression in *Vishad Sindhu*. When they were narrated in the punthies, the innocent villagers believed them to be true. Even *Vishad Sindhu*

was regarded as historically true by them. But the resurgence of puritanism has killed for us the possibility of using these myths again with that same faith which was the source of their life. In other words the 'cognitive function' of these myths is practically nil for a modern muslim. They do not evoke 'empathy' or 'recipathy'. They can do so only if the writers remove all accretions and revert to the original history of the prophets. This indicates the basic difference between a muslim mind of the sixteenth or the seventeenth century when Syed Sultan wrote his epic and that of the 20th century when Nazrul and Farrukh have written their eulogies. May be the influences of Hazrat Majaddid Alfe-Sani, Shah Waliullah and Syed Ahmed Shaheed coupled with the influences derived from western nationalism and scientific thinking have made a modern muslim less ready to accept a story without historical evidences. The result is the evocation of empathy or recipathy only within the context of true incidents. This is why a modern poet like Farrukh has to talk of Makka Moazzama and Hera and Khulafai. Rasheda rather than of Ameer Hamza in Chittagong.

There is of course another group of myths which have nothing to do with beliefs. Of them the major tales are the well-known stories of Hatem Tai, Sohrab and Rustum, Laila-Majnu, Shirin-

Farhad, Sindbad and Yusuf-Zuleikha. There are other unexplored tales in the *Shah Nama* of Firdausi and in the lives and actions of muslim saints which may also be utilised for the "affective", "guiding" "cathartic and deterrent" and "eductive" functions. Sindbad myth, for example, has been utilised by Farrukh to guide our conduct, portray our goal and propel our actions towards that goal. Hindu myths cannot fulfil these function, for the muslim mind because a muslim cannot accept the idol-worship-tendencies associated with those myths and it reacts unfavourably to the philosophical complexes such as the theories of Karma, re-birth and incarnation which flow as submerged undercurrents beneath the images. But inspite of the fact that neither Hatem Tai nor Sohrab nor Rustum was a muslim, the myths relating to their exploits work as 'emotionally influential images' and fulfil most of the functions mentioned above.

We have so far discussed extravertive myths, that "are descriptive of or orientated towards perceptible events in the environment, particularly social interactions in the imagined past or future"<sup>15</sup>. A modern muslim is also a modern man. He has been affected by modern scientific discoveries and the attempt to "kill the sun" and destroy the "moon" as Lawrence put it. He is living in a tragic world and therefore he can

not escape what Unamuno calls, "the tragic sense of life"<sup>16</sup> His traditional society is constantly receiving the impact of technological forces, his orthodox values are being questioned and evaluated by alien standards imported from a different tradition and he feels it necessary either to conquer these new forces and muslimise them or to adjust himself to the new situation by discarding many fundamentals of his belief. The material progress of the western world under the influence of scientific traditions has relegated the muslims to the background. That is why he has to think of progress in terms of scientific advancement. Along with this has come the secular attitude which is opposed to his long-cherished religious attitude because the former tries to divide his mundane and spiritual activities and consider them as fulfilling different functions whereas the latter asserts that all human activities are related to the one and only end, that of bringing man nearer and nearer to God. Thus the modern civilization has given birth to conflicts in the mind of a modern muslim. An East Pakistani is not away from this arena of dissention. On the other hand he is in the midst of it. He is therefore born in tension and he lives in tension throughout his life. His tensions are further intensified by the peculiar nature and the mixed heritage of his language which he wants to use effectively as a writer. Bengali has a core of

words which is common to both the muslims and Hindus. But the predominance of hindu writers have brought in Hindu philosophy, ideas and symbols which have already become a heritage of this language and a muslim writer cannot avoid the direct impact of those myths, images and symbols, and hence, of Hindu thought and culture. Nazrul Islam tried to synthesise these different cultural trends by using imagery and symbols drawn from all these sources. But most often they confuse the issue by rousing contradictory feelings. For example, when Nazrul talks of having loved his beloved through thousand cycles of births and rebirths, we can hardly accept it as a genuine feeling. We feel that he is probably using a convention which Vidyapati and other Hindu poets have used. How can he have the same feeling which Vidyapati had when the latter said

For millions of ages  
Our hearts have lain together  
Yet our hearts are not full!

The only method by which Nazrul has been able to synthesise these myths and symbols is by utilising these in order to express his basic philosophy of existence—that of his love of Love and his violent rebellion against the lack of love in individuals and the society. Thus we notice that myths become subservient today to the distinctive vision of the poet. They may lead to the crea-

tion of esoteric worlds and hence of "intricate individual myths". "The theme of this experience, set forth in concrete figurative language, all of which, though necessarily both private and unique, are similar in certain significant respects, and thus common to a large number of self-conscious persons, generation after generation ..... Though the imagery in necessarily derived from the external world, the reference is internal"<sup>17</sup>. There is every sign in East Pakistani literature of this seclusive inward tendency. It may be safe to predict that as the tensions grow and the conflicting loyalties of cultures, language, past and the present, become more and more severe there is more likelihood of the growth of "this seclusive, inward, concentrated and spiritual" orientation. The "gregarious, outward, expansive and public" orientation of some of the older myths may be altered beyond recognition because of the personal touch. Thus a new muslim tradition is likely to emerge, the tradition of world may be interpreted with reference to the internal states of Consciousness and the vision still remain moored to deep-set racial and cultural thoughts and beliefs.









## notes to chapter I

- 1 This poem describes how 'Truth' or 'Dharma' took to muslim dress and invaded Jajpur. According to Sukumar Sen, it refers to the lightning invasion of Orissa by Firoz Shah Tughlak in the mid-fourteenth century. The only ms. of the poem has been found as an additional section in one of the three manuscripts of *Shunnya Purana*, supposed to have been written by Ramai Pundit, one of the most eminent writers of *Dharmamangala Kavvyas*. This poem is also known as *Bada Jalali* and, in form, is a ballad, used to be sung on the last day of the Gajana-festival of the Hindus. The poem starts with a condemnation of the Brahmins who set out begging and, when refused, cursed and tried means to ruin those families. This is given as the cause of the transformation of Dharma into a Muslim or, as the poet says, 'Javana' that is, the untouchable.

- 2 As an example we may refer to the quarrel between the Qadi and the devotees of Manasa Devi in *Manasa-Mangola* quoted by Dinesh Chandra Sen in *Vanga Sahitya Parichaya*, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1914, pp. 213-215. Similar examples can be quoted from other popular poems even as late as the eighteenth century.
- 3 This is what a modern Hindu historian of Bengali literature writes about these poets: "The literature produced since the Sepoy Mutiny exhibited and glorified Hindu Nationalism". (*Bangla Sahitya Parikrama* by Bholanath Ghosh, Calcutta, 1958, p. 323). This statement is borne out by such poems as Hemchandra Sen's *Bharata-Sangeet* (1870) Navin Sen's trilogy *Raivataka* (1886), *Kurukhetra* (1893) and *Prabhasa* (1896). There is an interesting and instructive incident connected with the publication of *Bharata-Sangeet*. When the government objected to the publication in *Education-Gazette*, Bhudeva Chandra, the editor, wrote back that this poem was a historical one intended to rouse Hindu sentiments against the Moghuls in the 17th century. This anti-muslim feeling is evident in Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandamatha* (1882) and his historical novels—*Rajasingha* (1882), and *Sitaram* (1887). *Anandamatha* became the

ideal book for the new Hindu revivalists. Its theme is freedom of Bengali Hindus from Muslim domination. For Hemchandra's *Bharat-Sangeet*, see *Hemchandra Granthavali*, vol. 1.; ed. by Sajani Kanta Das, Vangiya Sahitya Parishat, Calcutta, 1957. pp. 115-121.

- 4 The struggle between Manasingha and Pratapaditya and Pratap's defeat and death by starvation indicate Bharatchandra's sympathy for the defeated king. Pratap, incidentally, figures in later Bengali literature, with Sitaram and other Hindu Zemindars, as the symbol of Hindu freedom.

In this connection it is also instructive to read the dialogue between the Emperor of Delhi and Majumdar. The king appears to be a crude fanatic proselytiser while Majumdar gives a philosophical exposition of the unity of God and thus appears to be more learned and sensitive. (*Bharatchandrer Granthavali*, ed. by Brojendranath Bandopadhyay and Sajani Kanta Das, Calcutta, pp. 329-345). What is more indicative of this attitude is the next incident related in pp. 350 ff. where the Emperor of Delhi bows down to Bhavananda and becomes a believer in gods and goddesses and even asks the Brahmin to intercede with the goddess and ask forgiveness for him, (p. 360).

- 5 Shri Caitanya was born in Navadvip ( the present district of Kushtia in Nadia) in 1486 A.D. He started preaching his religion of love after 1510 A.D. Two of his most important disciples were Rupa Goswami and Sanatana Goswami originally ministers of Hussain Shah known respectively as Sakar Mallik and Dabir Khan. They were well versed in Persian literature and knew Islamic mysticism. It is therein exposition of Vais-hnavaism which became the accepted code of the later Vaishnavas.
- 6 For information regarding these saints the following books and periodicals may be con-sulted : Ibn Batuta's Travels (Text) II, 441 (translation by Mahdi Hasan). [He says that he saw Shaikh Shah Jalal in Sylhet] : "The Saints in Bengal — Sheikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi and Shah Jalal" by Dr. A. Rahim in *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, vol. VIII, Part III, July, 1960, pp. 206-226; *Siyar-ul-Arefin* and other "malfudzats", such as *Khazinat-al-Asfiyah*, See also *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.
- 7 *Muslim Bengali Literature* by Dr. Inamul Haq, Pakistan Publications, Karachi, 1957, p. 87
- 8 Both of them were well-versed in Persian language and literature.

- 9 S. K. Sen in *Islami Bangla Sahitya*, Calcutta, 1949, p. 5 admits that Muslims were 'the pioneres and the only rulers in this sphere of Romantic tales'.
- 10 Sankaracarya's doctrine of unity (Advaitabada) and Hazrat Mohiuddin Ibnul Arabi's doctrine (Wahdatul-Ujud or the Unity of existence or Being ) have remarkable similalrity. Muslim Sufis did not borrow from Sankaracaya but when they emphasised "Wahdatul Ujud" Hindus found it easier to accept Islam though Wahdatul Ujud is in one fundamental aspect entirely antihindu : it is iconoclastic.
- 11 *Muslim Bengali literature*, p. 174
- 12 This is evident in the colloquial Bengali style in which Tekchand Thakur wrote his *Alaler Gharer Dulal*, the story of a young aristocrat.
- 13 *A Dictionary of the Bengali Language*, by W. Cary vol. 1. Serampore. 1825. "Preface".
- 14 *Punthi Pariciti* by Abdul Karim Sahitya-Visarada ed. by Ahmad Sharif, Dacca University, 1958, p. 17.
- 15 *Kissa Alif Laila*, Calcutta, 1924 (printed at Sulemani press) completed by Aizuddin in 1897 A.D.

- 16 See also *Noornama* by Abdul Hakim, introduction, quoted in *Punthi Pariciti*, pp. 260-261. The poet asserts that he has written for those who do not know Arabic and Persian because all languages are God's creation and God understands the language in which one speaks.
- 17 Abdul Karim Saintya-Visarada collected 24 manuscripts of *Kifayatul Musalleen* -- the largest in his collection after Sayyid Sultan's *Narivangnha* and *Of t-e-Rasul*; Alaol's *Padmanati* and Daulat Qazi's *Sati Maina* and *Lor Chandrani* [see *Punthi Pariciti*].
- 18 *Muslim Bengali Literature*, p. III
- 19 *Padakalpataru* contains a good fable by Sayyid Murtaza.
- 20 By far the most eminent of the 19th century folk-poets is Lalan whose songs were discovered and popularized by Tagore. As an example of his style and symbols the following lines may be quoted :  

I don't know how the unknown bird enters  
the cage and flies away,  
If I could have once caught it I would have  
enchained it by my heart.



Though I have looked after it day and night  
I am still unable to understand its subtle,  
deceitful ways.

Though it relishes my milk and bannanas it  
never forgets Him.

The following books can be consulted by  
those interested in Baul and Murshida  
litature :

- 1 *Haramani* vols. 1,2,3 by Muhammad Mansuruddin.
- 2 "Kavi Pagla Kanai" by Dr. Mazharul Islam in *Sahittiki*, Rajshahi, 1959.
- 3 *Bangla Sahityer Itihash* by S.K. Sen, Calcutta, 1948, pp. 989-995.
- 4 *Banglar Baul O Baul Gan* by Upendranath Bhattacharya, Calcutta, 1957.

## notes to chapter 2

- 1 'The Company did not accept, until 1854, any *direct* responsibility for the education of the masses which would necessarily have meant education through the Indian languages: on the contrary, it *decided to educate a class of persons in English as a means of ultimately educating the masses through the Indian languages.*'

*A History of Education in India* ( During the British period) by Syed Nurullah and J.P.Naik, Macmillan & Co., 1951. p. 113.

Nurullah and Naik mention three forms of this *Downward filtration Theory*: (1) to educate only the upper classes with a view to creating a *governing class*, or, more properly, to "secure loyalty by the grant of petty favours"; (2) to educate upper classes because culture would naturally descend to the lower classes; (3) good education to a few ( that is, education through the medium

of English to some, who may or may not belong to the upper classes ) so that they may teach the masses. This, however, meant education to those who could *afford* to get it. This was the policy of Macaulay who in his famous minute which was dated 2nd February, 1835, proceeded further and condemned all oriental learning. He aimed at creating a class, Indian in form and colour but English in mentality. (*ibid*, pp. 135-142) For a detailed discussion of the neglect of Muslim interest in British Education policy, see "British Education Policy", by Dr. A.R. Mullick, ch. IX of *A History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. II (pp. 194-229). One of the most glaring instances is the establishment of the Hindu College 'at places of greatest interest' and among 'superior and middle classes of the natives' from whom native servants of the Company were drawn and 'whose influence on the rest of the countrymen is the most extensive'. ..... This policy deprived the other sections of the Hindus and the whole of the Muslim community of the benefit of high English education under state patronage (*ibid.*, Pakistan Historical Society, vol. II, p. 203)

That muslims had become poor overnight is testified by W.W. Hunter in his discussion of the economic a

political policy towards them in Chapter IV of his book *Our Indian Mussalmans*. Overnight the Qazi system was abolished; English became the medium of instruction and the old maktabs were not integrated into the new system though later on Lord Auckland tried to pacify the Orientalists. But English education received full government patronage; English was the state language. Moreover, 'the Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis elevated the Hindu tax farmers to the position of landholders and gave them proprietary rights over the soil which transferred to them the wealth that would normally have gone to the Muslims.' "The Reform Movement in Bengal" by Abdul Bari in *A History of the Freedom Movement*, vol. I, Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1957, p. 542). For further details about the occupations of the muslims and their socio-economic condition, see *The Origin of Musallmans of Bengal* by Khondkar Furli Rubbee, Calcutta, 1895, chs. V and VI.

- 2 The missionaories established their schools in North Bengal after Dr. Carey, a representative of the Baptist missionary society, arrived there in 1793. In 1799 Ward and Marshman established themselves in the Dutch Settlement of Serampore and

were joined by Carey. This is the famous *Serampore Trio* which carried on translation of theological literature and the publication of tracts. Though the Company's attitude was favourable to them before 1765, after the acquisition of sovereignty it became neutral. In spite of the lack of financial support from the government these institutions flourished though they were 'not popular' (Nurullah and Naik, *op. cit.*, p. 179). 'On the body of the Muslim society, they exercised little or no influence whatsoever' (*ibid.*, p. 177).

- 3 Hindu revivalism took various forms. One was the reform-movement within the community pioneered by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. The other was that conducted by Swami Vivekananda, the third was the movement of Raja Rammohan Roy to reform the basic tenets of Hinduism. The second and the third were less orthodox than the first but of these two, the third was condemned as anti-hindu. As a matter of fact, the 'Brahmo Samaj' established by Rammohan became just a refined section of the Hindu Community. The unity of Godhead and his iconoclasm have been supported by Vivekananda too. See 'Raja Rammohan O Bangalee Samaj' in *Bangalee Sanskriti and Bangalee Sahitya* by

Ranjit Kumar Sen, Calcutta, 1959, pp. 133-138 and *Sawami Vivekananda and Bengali Unavingsha Shatardi* by Girija Sankar Raichaudhuri, Calcutta, 1956.

- 4 Of the 201 names of important Hindu, Muslim and Indian Christian residents of Calcutta mentioned in a history of old Calcutta only four Muslim names are found and of these four two are Nawab Sirajuddaula and Nawab Meerjafar. (vide, *Prachin Kolikata Parichay* by Harihar Seth, Calcutta, 1952, ch. XIV, pp. 422-604).

That the communication with Calcutta was not easy is evident from the description of the communication system in chapter IV of *Studies in the History of the Bengal Subah (1740-47)*. Vol. I: Social and Economic by Kalikinkar Datta, University Calcutta, 1936, pp. 387 — 416. Though Dr. Datta shows on p. 392 that the roads from Calcutta were broken, he concludes that there was good facility for communication (p. 410). He also forgets the social disturbances during the early nineteenth century and the large number of robbers which made communication a dangerous problem. However, on pages 409 — 412 he describes the economic isolation of the villages. This also means that the muslim

gentry was culturally isolated and stayed far away from the main trends of socio-political-economic development.

- 5 See preface to *Muharram Shareef*, Dacca, 1949, p. 25. The whole preface is directed against the distortion of history by Meer Musharraf Hossain and Punthi writers.
- 6 *Ibid.* p. 2.
- 7 This is borne out by the fact that the Muslim League was accepted by the Muslims of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent as their national organisation only after it passed the famous Lahore resolution which declared independent Pakistan as the ultimate goal of the muslims.
- 8 "Amar Kaihiyat" (My complaint) in *Sanchita*, Calcutta, 1951, p. 99.
- 9 See, for example, Mohitlalal's "Nadir Shaher Jagaran" and Satyen Datta's "Kabar-i-Noor-jahan".
- 10 *Kallol Yuga* by Achintya Kumar Sengupta, Calcutta, 1953, p. 184.
- 11 In this connection see note no. 11 of chapter I.

- 12 'Introduction' to the issue "Myth and Myth-Making", by Henry A. Murray in *Daedalus*, Spring, 1959, Middletown, Connecticut, U.S.A. (Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences), p. 215.
- 13 *ibid.*, pp. 215—216.
- 14 As in *Hanifa-o-Kayra Paree* by Sabirid Khan (quoted in *Muslim Bengali Literature* by Dr. Enamul Haq, Pakistan Publications, Karachi, 1958, p. 84.)
- 15 *ibid.*, p. 220.
- 16 *The Tragic Sense of Life* by Miguel de Unamuno, tr. by J. E. Crawford Fitch, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., 1954.
- 17 *Daedalus*, op. cit., p. 220.  
 In this connection see also *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell, Meridian books, New York, 1956, pp. 387 ff. Campbell writes of the hero in a modern myth: "The descent of the Orientals sciences from the heavens to the earth (from seventeenth century astronomy to nineteenth century biology), and their concentration today, at last, on man himself (in twentieth century anthropology and psychology), mark the path of a prodigious transfer of the focal point of human wonder. Not the animal world, not



the plant world, not the miracle of the spheres, but man himself is now the crucial mystery." (p. 391).

See also: "The Necessity of Myth" by Mark Schorer in *Daedalus*, op. cit., p. 369ff. "Great literature is impossible without a previous imaginative consent to a ruling mythology that makes intelligible and unitive the whole of the experience from which particular fables spring and from which they, in turn, take their meaning." (p. 361).

It is about this necessity at a different level, at the level of self-revelation which Campbell has mentioned, that Ernst Cassirer speaks of the power of metaphor in *Language and Myth*, (tr. by Susanne K. Langer, Dover Publications, U.S.A., 1946.) While speaking of the freedom of modern language from the limitations of early myths [extravertive myths] Cassirer points out the myth-making capacity of language. He says: (p. 99) "Word and mythic image, which once conformed the human mind as hard realistic powers, have now cast off all reality and effectuality; they have become a light, bright ether in which the spirit can move without let or hindrance. This liberation is achieved not because the mind throws aside the sensuous forms"

word and image, but in that it uses them both as organs of its own, and thereby recognises them for what they really are: *forms of its own self-revelation*" (italics mine).

## *selective glossary*



## selective glossary

*Annadamanagala* is a long narrative poem classified as a *Mangalakavya* (see below), written by the greatest poet in this tradition, Bharatchandra in 1752-53 A.D.

*Baul* or *Baool* is the name of a class of muslim mystic singers who are believers in the concept of one God manifested through the Prophets and Saints and in this universe. Their major characteristic is their indulgence in songs sung in a particular tune which has thus come to be known as the Baool tune.

*Caitanyacaritamrita* is the best life of Shri Caitannya. There is a difference of opinion regarding the date of its composition. It was written by Krishnadas Kaviraj most probably before 1549 A.D.

*Chautisha* is an elegy originally composed in Sanskrit as hymns in honour of gods and goddesses.

ses. It has 34 verses with the 34 letters of the Sanskrit used in chronological order to open each verse. It was first introduced in Bengali, according to Dr. Enamul Huq (*Muslim Bengali Literature*, p. 89) by Shaikh Faizullah.

*Dobhashi Punthi* is a class of 'Punthis' or narrative poems which deliberately uses the colloquial idiom of the Muslims of Bengal. The largest number of this type of poems were produced during the late eighteenth century, i.e., immediately after the downfall of Nawab Sirajuddaula.

*Ghazal* is originally a Persian literary form "generally equated with the lyric" (Arberry : *Hafiz*, Cambridge University Press, 1953, p. 1). It consists of several couplets almost independent in idea but related to each other by the mood stated in the first couplet.

*Ghazirijay* is a form of *Vijaya Kavya* (see below) which celebrates the exploits of well-known 'Peer' (Saint) Ismail Ghazi. *Keertanas* are songs celebrating the love of Radha and Krishna and thus the love of man for God.

*Mahabharata*, The is the longest Sanskrit epic supposed to be written by a mythical poet

Vedavyas. It is generally agreed that the present *Mahabharata* is a later improvised edition containing many interpolations. It was first translated and adapted into Bengali by Kashiram Das in the early sixteenth century. The form is known as *Panchali* and it used to be recited in a singsong manner.

*Makul Hossain* is a form of narrative poems describing the martyrdom of Hadrat Imam Hossain, the grandson of the Holy Prophet of Islam at Karvala.

*Marafati* is a form of devotional song generally sung by mystic sects in Bengal.

*Marsia* is a long elegiac lament mourning the death of Hadrat Imam Hossain.

*Murshidis* are songs celebrating the glory of the 'Peer' or the Saint who is regarded most as the incarnation of God.

*Navi Vangsha* is the magnum opus of Sayyid Sultan. It describes the history of this world from its first creation to the birth of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

*Ofat-i-Rasul* is another poem by Sayyid Sultan which describes the death of the Holy Prophet

of Islam. Abdul Karim Sahityavisarad considers it to be a part of Navinangsha but Dr. Enamul Huq regards it as an independent composition. The large number of independent manuscripts seem to prove Dr. Huq's contention.

*Padavali* means a collection of *Pada* or Vaishnava Songs written in an artificial poetic diction known as *Vrajabili*. A *Pada* is a mystic love-song sung in honour of Radha and Krishna.

*Punthis* mean narrative poems written in *par* or couplets.

*Ramayana*, This is the earliest Sanskrit epic written by Valmiki. The best Bengali adaptation was done by Karittivasa who flourished in the fifteenth century.

*Rasul Vijay* is a form of historical narrative depicting the mythical or semi-historical exploits of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

*Sufi* a Muslim mystic.



the real Yoga.

*Yoga-Kalandara* is a type of mystic poem which tried to synthesise yoga practice and the muslim sufi practice.